

This includes foreign banks, financial institutions, insurance companies, flagging registries, and more.

If someone is knowingly providing financial support to the Iranian regime's largest influx of cash, we should know about it, and we should stop it. That is what this bill does.

This bill expands the authorities to cripple this oil network, to stop the financing of ballistic missiles, to stop the financing of uranium enrichment, to stop the financing of Iran's nuclear ambitions, and to stop their financing of terrorism. This is a multifaceted approach.

We saw under the Biden administration an administration that not only did not enforce sanctions against Iran, but it also allowed the illicit oil trade to explode to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars.

Those funds are what funded October 7. That is what funded the death and destruction that we have seen across the Middle East.

We saw under the Obama Administration an attempt to appease the Iranian regime, to drop off pallets of cash in the hopes that somehow that would stop them from pursuing nuclear weapons, that that would somehow stop them from possessing enriched uranium, and that that would somehow stop them from financing terrorism.

Peace through strength means understanding that sometimes you must take action and that sometimes you must use military force. After the regime refused to negotiate in good faith and was mass-producing ballistic missiles at such a rate that it would be almost impossible in the future to stop their nuclear ambitions, President Trump took action.

This was not an illegal war. This was not a war of choice. Republicans and Democrats have said ad nauseam that Iran cannot get a nuclear weapon. Sadly, it seems some of my colleagues would be okay if they did so, as long as Donald Trump wasn't President. Some of my colleagues hate Donald Trump so much that they care more about the fact that he is President than they do about the fact that he is stopping the Iranian regime's 47-year reign of terror.

I have listened to some of my colleagues over the last 2 weeks in amazement. They have completely reversed their positions on so many issues, including 53 who just last Congress voted to say that Iran is the greatest state sponsor of terrorism but now no longer believe that. You have candidates running for Congress who are saying that the United States is the terrorist regime. It is insanity.

The fact is that we have a responsibility to stop this regime cold, to cut the head off of the snake. That is precisely what we are doing through military action and through a sanctions regime that has crippled Iran's capabilities.

There is more work to be done, and that is why we are passing this legisla-

tion. I thank Chairman MAST and Ranking Member MEEKS for supporting this through committee. I thank President Trump and the administration for supporting this bill today.

Mr. Speaker, it is a testament that, even if there are disagreements, we can find bipartisan support. We can find a path forward. We should be giving this administration and future administrations every tool necessary to ensure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon.

Mr. LATIMER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will be critical for closing loopholes in our existing sanctions infrastructure against Iran, strengthening the President's authorities to limit Tehran's oil trade. I compliment the bill's sponsor, my colleague from New York.

Last year, after an air attack, President Trump announced that we had obliterated Iran's nuclear capacity, but here we are again. Apparently, the job last year wasn't sufficient.

Trump's war of choice with Iran this year has made this bill even more necessary because while the President may want to move on from this war he started at some point in time, war is a two-way street. Just because he may want to claim victory, as he already has, and even though Iran's capabilities will be reduced, Iran may very well pose an even greater threat now that diplomacy has been taken off the table by this President.

To limit the long-term threat posed by Iran, it is critical that we further limit Tehran's ability to circumvent existing sanctions, tighten the screws on its ability to sell oil, and ensure that it does not gain access to the resources it needs to reconstitute either its nuclear program or its weapons capabilities.

This President has put us at considerable risk by starting this war and enabling a regime that is perhaps even more hard-line than the one that preceded it. While we can't close Pandora's box, we can and should take all steps necessary to prevent Tehran from building back the arsenal it now would surely want to use against us.

This bill accomplishes some of that task, and I support it. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIM. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTHRIE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1422, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to impose sanctions with respect to persons engaged in significant transactions related or incidental to the processing, refining, ex-

port, transfer or sale of oil, condensates, or other petroleum or petrochemical products in whole or in part from the Islamic Republic of Iran."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SAVE OUR SEQUOIAS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2709) to improve the health and resiliency of giant sequoias, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2709

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Save Our Sequoias Act".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.
- Sec. 3. Shared stewardship agreement for giant sequoias.
- Sec. 4. Giant sequoia lands coalition.
- Sec. 5. Giant sequoia health and resiliency assessment.
- Sec. 6. Giant sequoia emergency response.
- Sec. 7. Giant sequoia reforestation and rehabilitation strategy.
- Sec. 8. Giant sequoia strike teams.
- Sec. 9. Giant sequoia collaborative restoration grants.
- Sec. 10. Giant sequoia insect monitoring and technology.
- Sec. 11. Stewardship contracting for giant sequoias.
- Sec. 12. Giant sequoia emergency protection program and fund.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ASSESSMENT.—The term "Assessment" means the Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment required by section 5.

(2) COALITION.—The term "Coalition" means the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition codified under section 4(a).

(3) COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.—The term "collaborative process" means a collaborative process as described in section 4003(b)(2) of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (16 U.S.C. 7303(b)(2)).

(4) COVERED NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS.—The term "covered National Forest System lands" means the proclaimed National Forest System lands reserved or withdrawn from the public domain of the United States covering the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument, Sierra National Forest, and Tahoe National Forest.

(5) COVERED PUBLIC LANDS.—The term "covered public lands" means—

(A) the Case Mountain Extensive Recreation Management Area in California managed by the Bureau of Land Management; and

(B) Kings Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park in California managed by the National Park Service.

(6) GIANT SEQUOIA.—The term "giant sequoia" means a tree of the species *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

(7) PROTECTION PROJECT.—The term "Protection Project" means a Giant Sequoia Protection Project carried out under section 6.

(8) REFORESTATION.—The term "reforestation" means the act of renewing tree cover,

taking into consideration species composition and resilience, by establishing young trees through—

- (A) natural regeneration;
- (B) natural regeneration with site preparation and vegetation competition control; or
- (C) planting or direct seeding.

(9) **REHABILITATION.**—The term “rehabilitation” means any action taken during the 5-year period beginning on the last day of a wildland fire to repair or improve fire-impacted lands which are unlikely to recover to management-approved conditions.

(10) **RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “relevant Congressional Committees” means—

(A) the Committees on Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committees on Energy and Natural Resources, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, and Appropriations of the Senate.

(11) **RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL.**—The term “responsible official” means an employee of the Department of the Interior or Forest Service who has the authority to make and implement a decision on a proposed action.

(12) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(13) **SECRETARY CONCERNED.**—The term “Secretary concerned” means—

(A) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to covered National Forest System lands, or their designee; and

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to covered public lands, or their designee.

(14) **STRATEGY.**—The term “Strategy” means the Giant Sequoia Reforestation and Rehabilitation Strategy established under section 7.

(15) **STRIKE TEAM.**—The term “Strike Team” means a Giant Sequoia Strike Team established under section 8.

(16) **TRIBE.**—The term “Tribe” means the Tule River Indian Tribe of the Tule River Reservation, California.

SEC. 3. SHARED STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT FOR GIANT SEQUOIAS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after receiving a request from the Governor of the State of California or the Tribe, the Secretary shall enter into or expand an existing shared stewardship agreement or enter into a similar agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Governor of the State of California, and the Tribe to jointly carry out the short-term and long-term management and conservation of giant sequoias.

(b) **PARTICIPATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—If the Secretary has not received a request from the Governor of the State of California or the Tribe under subsection (a) before the date that is 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall enter into the agreement under subsection (a) and jointly implement such agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture.

(2) **FUTURE PARTICIPATION.**—If the Secretary receives a request from the Governor of the State of California or the Tribe any time after entering into the agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall accept the Governor of the State of California or the Tribe as a party to such agreement.

SEC. 4. GIANT SEQUOIA LANDS COALITION.

(a) **CODIFICATION.**—The Coalition is the entity established under the charter titled “Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition Charter” (or successor charter) signed during the period beginning June 2, 2022 and ending August 2, 2022 by each of the following:

(1) The National Park Service, representing Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

(2) The National Park Service, representing Yosemite National Park.

(3) The Forest Service, representing Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument.

(4) The Forest Service, representing Sierra National Forest.

(5) The Forest Service, representing Tahoe National Forest.

(6) The Bureau of Land Management, representing Case Mountain Extensive Recreation Management Area.

(7) The Tribe, representing the Tule River Indian Reservation.

(8) The State of California, representing Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

(9) The State of California, representing Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest.

(10) The University of California, Berkeley, representing Whitaker’s Research Forest.

(11) The County of Tulare, California, representing Balch Park.

(b) **DUTIES.**—In addition to the duties specified in the charter referenced in subsection (a), the Coalition shall—

(1) produce the Assessment under section 5;

(2) observe implementation, and provide policy recommendations to the Secretary concerned, with respect to—

(A) Protection Projects carried out under section 6; and

(B) the Strategy established under section 7;

(3) facilitate collaboration and coordination on Protection Projects, particularly projects that cross jurisdictional boundaries;

(4) facilitate information sharing, including best available science as described in section 5(d) and mapping resources; and

(5) support the development and dissemination of educational materials and programs that inform the public about the threats to the health and resiliency of giant sequoia groves and actions being taken to reduce the risk to such groves from high-severity wildfire, insects, and drought.

(c) **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, TECHNICAL SERVICES, AND STAFF SUPPORT.**—The Secretary shall make personnel of the Department of the Interior available to the Coalition for administrative support, technical services, development and dissemination of educational materials, and staff support that the Secretary determines necessary to carry out this section.

(d) **PUBLIC MEETING REQUIREMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Coalition shall provide for public observation at no less than one meeting annually.

(2) **CLOSED SESSIONS.**—The Coalition may close portions of a meeting as provided in paragraph (1) to the public only when discussion will involve—

(A) sensitive law enforcement, security, or emergency response matters, the public disclosure of which would compromise public safety; or

(B) confidential commercial information, private property information, or landowner information.

SEC. 5. GIANT SEQUOIA HEALTH AND RESILIENCY ASSESSMENT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Coalition shall submit to the relevant Congressional Committees a Giant Sequoia Health and Resiliency Assessment that, based on the best available science—

(1) identifies—

(A) each giant sequoia grove that has experienced a—

(i) stand-replacing disturbance; or

(ii) disturbance but continues to have living giant sequoias within the grove, including identifying the tree mortality and regeneration of giant sequoias within such grove;

(B) each giant sequoia grove that is at high risk of experiencing a stand-replacing disturbance;

(C) lands—

(i) contiguous or adjacent to giant sequoia groves that are at risk of experiencing high-severity wildfires that could adversely impact such giant sequoia groves; or

(ii) in which the placement of fuel breaks could reduce the risk of high-severity wildfires that could adversely impact giant sequoia groves; and

(D) each giant sequoia grove that has experienced a disturbance and is unlikely to naturally regenerate and is in need of reforestation;

(2) analyzes the resiliency of each giant sequoia grove to threats, such as—

(A) high-severity wildfire;

(B) insects, including beetle kill; and

(C) drought;

(3) examines how historical, Tribal, or current approaches to wildland fire suppression and forest management activities across various jurisdictions have impacted the health and resiliency of giant sequoia groves with respect to—

(A) high-severity wildfires;

(B) insects, including beetle kill; and

(C) drought; and

(4) includes program and policy recommendations that address—

(A) options to enhance communication, coordination, and collaboration, particularly for cross-boundary projects, to improve the health and resiliency of giant sequoias; and

(B) research gaps that should be addressed to improve the best available science on the giant sequoias.

(b) **ANNUAL UPDATES.**—Not later than 1 year after the submission of the Assessment under subsection (a), and annually thereafter, the Coalition shall submit an updated Assessment to the relevant Congressional Committees that—

(1) includes any new data, information, or best available science that has changed or become available since the previous Assessment was submitted;

(2) with respect to Protection Projects—

(A) includes information on the number of Protection Projects initiated the previous year and the estimated timeline for completing those projects;

(B) includes information on the number of Protection Projects planned in the upcoming year and the estimated timeline for completing those projects;

(C) provides status updates and long-term monitoring reports on giant sequoia groves after the completion of Protection Projects; and

(D) if the Secretary concerned failed to reduce hazardous fuels in at least 3 giant sequoia groves in the previous year, a written explanation that includes—

(i) a detailed explanation of what impediments resulted in failing to reduce hazardous fuels in at least 3 giant sequoia groves; and

(ii) a detailed explanation of what actions the Secretary concerned is taking to ensure that hazardous fuels are reduced in at least 3 giant sequoia groves the following year; and

(3) with respect to reforestation and rehabilitation of giant sequoias—

(A) contains updates on the implementation of the Strategy under section 7, including grove-level data on reforestation and rehabilitation activities; and

(B) provides status updates and monitoring reports on giant sequoia groves that have experienced reforestation or rehabilitation as part of the Strategy under section 7.

(c) **DASHBOARD.**—

(1) **REQUIREMENT TO MAINTAIN.**—The Coalition shall create and maintain a website that—

(A) publishes the Assessment, annual updates to the Assessment, and other educational materials developed by the Coalition;

(B) contains searchable information about individual giant sequoia groves, including the—

(i) resiliency of such groves to threats described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (a);

(ii) Protection Projects that have been proposed, initiated, or completed in such groves; and

(iii) reforestation and rehabilitation activities that have been proposed, initiated, or completed in such groves; and

(C) maintains a searchable database to track—

(i) the status of Federal environmental reviews and authorizations for specific Protection Projects and reforestation and rehabilitation activities; and

(ii) the projected cost of Protection Projects and reforestation and rehabilitation activities.

(2) **SEARCHABLE DATABASE.**—The Coalition shall include information on the status of Protection Projects in the searchable database created under paragraph (1)(C), including—

(A) a comprehensive permitting timetable;

(B) the status of the compliance of each lead agency, cooperating agency, and participating agency with the permitting timetable;

(C) any modifications of the permitting timetable required under subparagraph (A), including an explanation as to why the permitting timetable was modified; and

(D) information about project-related public meetings, public hearings, and public comment periods, which shall be presented in English and the predominant language of the community or communities most affected by the project, as that information becomes available.

(d) **BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE.**—In utilizing the best available science for the Assessment, the Coalition shall include—

(1) data and peer-reviewed research from academic institutions with a demonstrated history of studying giant sequoias and with experience analyzing distinct management strategies to improve giant sequoia resiliency;

(2) traditional ecological knowledge from the Tribe related to improving the health and resiliency of giant sequoia groves; and

(3) data from Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments or agencies, and other interested stakeholders with a demonstrated history of studying giant sequoias and with experience analyzing distinct management strategies to improve giant sequoia resiliency.

(e) **TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS.**—In carrying out this section, the Secretary may enter into memorandums of understanding or agreements with other Federal agencies or departments, State or local governments, Tribal governments, private entities, or academic institutions to improve, with respect to the Assessment, the use and integration of—

(1) advanced remote sensing and geospatial technologies;

(2) statistical modeling and analysis; or

(3) any other technology the Secretary determines will benefit the quality of information used in the Assessment.

(f) **PLANNING.**—The Coalition shall make information from this Assessment available to the Secretary concerned and State of California to integrate into the—

(1) State of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan;

(2) Forest Service's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy (or successor plan); and

(3) Department of the Interior's Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan (or successor plan).

(g) **RELATION TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969.**—The development and submission of the Assessment under subsection (a) shall not be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

SEC. 6. GIANT SEQUOIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE.

(a) **EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO PROTECT GIANT SEQUOIAS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—

(A) **EMERGENCY DETERMINATION.**—Congress determines that—

(i) an emergency exists on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands that makes it necessary to carry out Protection Projects that take needed actions to respond to the threat of wildfires, insects, and drought to giant sequoias; and

(ii) Protection Projects are necessary to control the immediate impacts of the emergency described in clause (i) and are needed to mitigate harm to life, property, or important natural or cultural resources on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands.

(B) **APPLICATION.**—The emergency determination established under subparagraph (A) shall apply to all covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands.

(C) **EXPIRATION.**—The emergency determination established under subparagraph (A) shall expire on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—While the emergency determination established under paragraph (1) is in effect, the following shall apply:

(A) The Secretary concerned, acting through a responsible official, shall carry out Protection Projects on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands in accordance with this section, all applicable land management plans, and the laws (including regulations) applicable to the Secretary concerned.

(B) A responsible official shall carry out Protection Projects in accordance with the following, as applicable:

(i) Section 220.4(b) of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect July 21, 2022), with respect to covered National Forest System lands.

(ii) Section 46.150 of title 43, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect October 12, 2022), with respect to covered public lands.

(iii) Section 402.05 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect July 21, 2022), with respect to covered National Forest System lands and covered public lands.

(iv) Section 800.12 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect July 21, 2022), with respect to covered National Forest System lands and covered public lands.

(C) The rules established under subsections (d) and (e) of section 40807 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (16 U.S.C. 6592c(d), (e)) shall apply with respect to Protection Projects by substituting "Protection Projects" for "authorized emergency action under this section" each place it appears in such subsections.

(D) Protection Projects shall be subject to the requirements of section 106 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6516).

(3) **PROTECTION PROJECTS.**—The responsible official shall carry out the following forest management activities as Protection Projects under the emergency determination under this section:

(A) Conducting hazardous fuels management, including mechanical thinning, mastication, and prescribed burning.

(B) Removing hazard trees, dead trees, or dying trees, as determined by the responsible official.

(C) Removing trees to address overstocking or crowding in a forest stand, consistent with the appropriate basal area of the forest stand and the best available science, as determined by the responsible official.

(D) Activities to address insects, disease, invasive species, and vegetative encroachment of a giant sequoia grove.

(E) Any combination of activities described in this paragraph.

(4) **REQUIREMENTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Protection Projects carried out under paragraph (3) and reforestation and rehabilitation activities carried out under this Act that are described by subparagraph (C) are categorically excluded from the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332).

(B) **AVAILABILITY.**—The Secretary concerned shall use the categorical exclusion established under subparagraph (A) in accordance with this section.

(C) **REQUIREMENTS.**—A Protection Project or reforestation or rehabilitation activity is described by this subparagraph if such Protection Project or reforestation or rehabilitation activity—

(i) covers an area of no more than—

(I) 2,000 acres within giant sequoia groves; and

(II) 3,000 acres on lands identified under section 5(a)(1)(C); and

(ii) occurs on Federal land or non-Federal land with the consent of the non-Federal landowner.

(D) **EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.**—The extraordinary circumstances procedures under provisions (e) through (g) of section 1b.3 of title 7, Code of Federal Regulations, shall apply to a Protection Project or reforestation or rehabilitation activity that is categorically excluded under subparagraph (A).

(E) **USE OF OTHER AUTHORITIES.**—To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall use the authorities provided under this section in combination with other authorities to carry out Protection Projects, including—

(i) good neighbor agreements entered into under section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a); and

(ii) stewardship contracting projects entered into under section 604 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c).

(F) **SAVINGS CLAUSE.**—With respect to joint Protection Projects and reforestation and rehabilitation activities involving the Tribe, nothing in this section shall be construed to add any additional regulatory requirements onto the Tribe.

(b) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary concerned shall reduce hazardous fuels in no fewer than 3 giant sequoia groves each year.

(c) **PUBLIC NOTICE.**—The Secretary concerned shall provide notice of each Protection Project on a publicly available website maintained by the Secretary concerned.

SEC. 7. GIANT SEQUOIA REFORESTATION AND REHABILITATION STRATEGY.

(a) **REFORESTATION AND REHABILITATION STRATEGY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Coalition, shall develop and implement a strategy, to be known as the Giant Sequoia Reforestation and Rehabilitation Strategy, to enhance the reforestation and rehabilitation of giant sequoia groves that—

(A) identifies giant sequoia groves in need of reforestation or rehabilitation, giving highest priority to groves identified under section 5(a)(1)(A)(i);

(B) creates a priority list of reforestation and rehabilitation activities;

(C) identifies and addresses—

(i) barriers to reforestation or rehabilitation, including—

(I) regulatory and funding barriers;

(II) seedling shortages or related nursery infrastructure capacity constraints;

(III) labor and workforce shortages;

(IV) technology and science gaps; and

(V) site preparation challenges;

(ii) potential public-private partnership opportunities to complete high-priority reforestation or rehabilitation projects;

(iii) a timeline for addressing the backlog of reforestation for giant sequoias in the 10-year period after the agreement is entered into under section 3; and

(iv) strategies to ensure genetic diversity across giant sequoia groves; and

(D) includes program and policy recommendations needed to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the Strategy.

(2) ASSESSMENT.—The Secretary may incorporate the Strategy into the Assessment under section 5.

(b) PRIORITY REFORESTATION PROJECTS AMENDMENT.—Section 3(e)(4)(C)(ii)(I) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1601(e)(4)(C)(ii)(I)) is amended—

(1) in item (bb), by striking “and”;

(2) in item (cc), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(dd) shall include reforestation and rehabilitation activities conducted under section 7 of the Save Our Sequoias Act.”.

SEC. 8. GIANT SEQUOIA STRIKE TEAMS.

(a) GIANT SEQUOIA STRIKE TEAMS.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary concerned shall each establish a Giant Sequoia Strike Team to assist the Secretary concerned with the implementation of—

(A) primarily, section 6; and

(B) secondarily, section 7.

(2) DUTIES.—Each Strike Team shall—

(A) assist the Secretary concerned with any reviews, including analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), consultations under division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code (commonly referred to as the National Historic Preservation Act), and consultations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.);

(B) implement any necessary site preparation work in advance of or as part of a Protection Project or reforestation or rehabilitation activity;

(C) implement Protection Projects under section 6; and

(D) implement reforestation or rehabilitation activities under section 7.

(3) MEMBERS.—The Secretary concerned may appoint no more than 10 individuals each to serve on a Strike Team comprised of—

(A) employees of the Department of the Interior;

(B) employees of the Forest Service;

(C) private contractors from any nonprofit organization, State government, Tribal Government, local government, academic institution, or private organization; and

(D) volunteers from any nonprofit organization, State government, Tribal Government, local government, academic institution, or private organization.

SEC. 9. GIANT SEQUOIA COLLABORATIVE RESTORATION GRANTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the parties to the agreement under section 3, shall establish a program or expand an existing program to award grants to eligible entities to advance, facilitate, or improve giant sequoia health and resiliency.

(b) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The Secretary may award grants under this section to any nonprofit organization, Tribal Government, local government, academic institution, or private organization to help advance, facilitate, or improve giant sequoia health and resiliency.

(c) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities that—

(1) primarily, are likely to have the greatest impact on giant sequoia health and resiliency; and

(2) secondarily—

(A) are small businesses or Tribal entities, particularly in rural areas; and

(B) create or support jobs, particularly in rural areas.

(d) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—Funds from grants awarded under this section shall be used to—

(1) create, expand, or develop markets for hazardous fuels removed under section 6, including markets for biomass and biochar;

(2) facilitate hazardous fuel removal under section 6, including by reducing the cost of transporting hazardous fuels removed as part of a Protection Project;

(3) expand, enhance, develop, or create facilities or land that can store or process hazardous fuels removed under section 6;

(4) establish, develop, expand, enhance, or improve nursery capacity or infrastructure necessary to facilitate the Strategy established under section 7; or

(5) support Tribal management and conservation of giant sequoias, including funding for Tribal historic preservation officers.

SEC. 10. GIANT SEQUOIA INSECT MONITORING AND TECHNOLOGY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall—

(1) develop and implement a strategy for monitoring insects in giant sequoia groves with a high-risk or previous history of insect infestations; and

(2) seek to enter into public-private partnerships to deploy technology to assist in the short-term and long-term monitoring of giant sequoia groves with current or potential insect infestations.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall submit a report to the relevant Congressional Committees that contains—

(1) the strategy required under subsection (a)(1);

(2) an update on the effectiveness of the monitoring program in preventing or addressing insect infestations in giant sequoia groves; and

(3) program and policy recommendations to further address—

(A) research gaps regarding giant sequoia resiliency to insects; and

(B) opportunities to improve the resiliency of giant sequoias to insects.

SEC. 11. STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING FOR GIANT SEQUOIAS.

(a) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.—Section 604 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (a)(2) to read as follows:

“(2) DIRECTOR.—The term ‘Director’ means the Director of the Bureau of Land Management with respect to Bureau of Land Management lands and the Director of the National Park Service with respect to lands within Kings Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park.”; and

(2) in subsection (b), by striking “national forests and the public lands” and inserting “national forests, public lands, and lands

within Kings Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park”.

(b) GIANT SEQUOIA STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS.—Section 604(c) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6591c(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(8) Promoting the health and resiliency of giant sequoias.”.

(c) STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING IN CERTAIN NATIONAL PARKS.—Stewardship contracting projects occurring in Kings Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Park, and Yosemite National Park shall be carried out in accordance with the laws (including regulations) applicable to the National Park Service, including section 100753 of title 54, United States Code.

SEC. 12. GIANT SEQUOIA EMERGENCY PROTECTION PROGRAM AND FUND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1011 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting at the end the following:

“§ 101123. Giant Sequoia Emergency Protection Program and Fund

“(a) GIANT SEQUOIA EMERGENCY PROTECTION PROGRAM.—The National Park Foundation, in coordination with the National Forest Foundation and the Foundation for America’s Public Lands, shall design and implement a comprehensive program to assist and promote philanthropic programs of support that benefit—

“(1) primarily, the management and conservation of giant sequoias on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands to promote resiliency to wildfires, insects, and drought; and

“(2) secondarily, the reforestation of giant sequoias on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands impacted by wildfire.

“(b) GIANT SEQUOIA EMERGENCY PROTECTION FUND.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The National Park Foundation, in coordination with the National Forest Foundation and the Foundation for America’s Public Lands, shall establish a joint special account to be known as the Giant Sequoia Emergency Protection Fund (referred to in this section as ‘the Fund’), to be administered in support of the program established under subsection (a).

“(2) FUNDS FOR GIANT SEQUOIA EMERGENCY PROTECTION.—The Fund shall consist of any gifts, devises, or bequests that are provided to the National Park Foundation, National Forest Foundation, or Foundation for America’s Public Lands for the purpose described in paragraph (1).

“(3) USE OF FUNDS.—Funds shall be available to the National Park Foundation, National Forest Foundation, and Foundation for America’s Public Lands without further appropriation, subject to the provisions in paragraph (4), for projects and activities approved by the Director of the National Park Service, Chief of the Forest Service, or Director of the Bureau of Land Management as appropriate, or their designees, to—

“(A) primarily, support the management and conservation of giant sequoias on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands to promote resiliency to wildfires, insects, and drought; and

“(B) secondarily, support the reforestation of giant sequoias on covered public lands and covered National Forest System lands impacted by wildfire.

“(4) TRIBAL SUPPORT.—Of the funds provided to the National Park Foundation, National Forest Foundation, and Foundation for America’s Public Lands under paragraph (3), not less than 15 percent of such funds shall be used to support Tribal management and conservation of giant sequoias including

funding for Tribal historic preservation officers.

“(c) SUMMARY.—Beginning 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the National Park Foundation, National Forest Foundation, and Foundation for America’s Public Lands shall include with their annual reports a summary of the status of the program and Fund created under this section that includes—

“(1) a statement of the amounts deposited in the Fund during the fiscal year;

“(2) the amount of the balance remaining in the Fund at the end of the fiscal year; and

“(3) a description of the program and projects funded during the fiscal year.

“(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms ‘covered public lands’ and ‘covered National Forest System lands’ have the meaning given such terms in section 2 of the Save Our Sequoias Act.

“(e) TERMINATION OF EFFECTIVENESS.—The authority provided by this section shall terminate 7 years after the date of enactment of the Save Our Sequoias Act.”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 1011 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting at the end the following:

“101123. Giant Sequoia Emergency Protection Program and Fund.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. ELFRETH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2709, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

□ 1600

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2709, the bipartisan Save Our Sequoias Act, led by Representatives Fong and Peters of California.

More than 120 years ago, President Teddy Roosevelt camped at the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias in what is today known as Yosemite National Park, and he famously recorded in his diary: “The majestic trunks, beautiful in color and in symmetry, rose around us like the pillars of a mightier cathedral than was ever conceived even by the fervor of the Middle Ages.”

Mr. Speaker, today, the majestic cathedral that inspired one of the Nation’s greatest conservation Presidents is facing an existential threat. In just 2 years, 2020 and 2021, we lost 20 percent of the world’s mature giant sequoias, which grow only in a specific area of California in the Sierra Nevadas in a combined size roughly the area of Washington, D.C., in about 70 distinct groves. That is the only place on Earth

where they grow naturally. Even though there is one planted out on The Mall here in Washington, it hasn’t fared quite as well as those in California.

Saying this is unprecedented is an understatement. The last known death by fire of a giant sequoia before this century dates back to 1297 AD.

Throughout their ancient lives, known to span over three millennia, giant sequoias standing in California today have lived through the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the birth of Christ, and the founding of our great Nation. These trees withstood thousands of years of fires, earthquakes, floods, and anything that Mother Nature could throw their way, but in the next 25 years, these iconic trees could be extinct in the wild because, quite simply, we have been loving them to death.

For the 1,000-year period from 800 to 1800, giant sequoias experienced an average of 30 fires per century. These low-severity fires cleared out undergrowth and shade-tolerant species, such as white fir, allowing the semi-serotinous sequoia cones to open and begin the regeneration process, but decades of fire suppression and a lack of forest management dropped the number of fires in these groves by a factor of tenfold, down to just three fires per century, with some groves untouched by fire for over a century.

In combination with historic drought conditions, this created a perfect storm of hazardous ladder fuels that carry fire up into the crown of the giant sequoias, creating virtually unstoppable infernos.

In the words of Dr. Christy Brigham, a scientist at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks: “Bureaucracy is slow. Wildfire is fast.”

We are going to need to get a lot faster if we want to save these trees. At its normal pace, it would take the Forest Service 52 years to treat just its 19 highest priority groves. That is time we simply do not have.

That is where the bipartisan Save Our Sequoias Act comes in today. This legislation gives Federal, State, Tribal, local, and private land managers the tools they need to expedite the restoration work necessary to protect giant sequoias.

The Save Our Sequoias Act expedites environmental reviews, formalizes interagency coordination through the Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition, and declares a congressional emergency to increase the pace and scale of forest management efforts.

I will briefly clarify the intent of Congress regarding this legislation as it relates to the Wilderness Act. Over the course of several months of bipartisan negotiations involving the Natural Resources Committee, the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service, and various stakeholders, several improvements were made to the legislation.

During these negotiations, there was clear, universal, and unambiguous

agreement that the Wilderness Act did not preclude the National Park Service from fulfilling its mission under the Organic Act of 1916 to replant giant sequoias in groves that had been essentially clear-cut by wildfire.

Because there was a clear consensus and prior statutory evidence demonstrating the compatibility of the Wilderness Act with these activities, which are fully outlined in the committee’s report, the final legislative text did not include any amendments to the Wilderness Act, which would have been unnecessary.

This bill, again, is a culmination of years of bipartisan work, and I thank the many co-leads of this legislation for their dedication and commitment to putting aside partisan politics and doing what is best for this iconic species.

I also recognize and thank many of the supporters who are instrumental in the crafting of this legislation, including the Tule River Tribe, Tulare County, Save the Redwoods League, CAL FIRE, Sierra Forest Products, Clay Jordan, Teresa Benson, and Garrett Dickman, as well as Drs. Stephen Sillett, Robert Van Pelt, Kristen Shive, and Christy Brigham.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this important bipartisan piece of legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,

Washington, DC, March 9, 2026.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,

Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This letter confirms our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 2709, the “Save Our Sequoias Act.” Thank you for collaborating with the Committee on Agriculture on the matters within our jurisdiction.

The Committee on Agriculture will forego any further consideration of this bill. However, by foregoing consideration at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over any subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. The Committee on Agriculture also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees, should it become necessary, and ask that you support such a request.

We would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 2709 and request a copy of our letters on this matter be published in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during Floor consideration.

Sincerely,

GLENN “GT” THOMPSON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,

Washington, DC, March 9, 2026.

Hon. GLENN THOMPSON,

Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: I write regarding H.R. 2709, the “Save Our Sequoias Act,” which was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on March 5, 2026.

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture and appreciate your willingness to forgo further consideration of the bill. I acknowledge that the

Committee on Agriculture will not formally consider H.R. 2709 and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained therein.

I am pleased to support your request to name members of the Committee on Agriculture to any conference committee to consider such provisions. I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during floor consideration of the bill and will include such letters in the committee report on H.R. 2709. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,

BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman.

Ms. ELFRETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 2709, the Save Our Sequoias Act, offered by my colleague, Representative FONG from California.

The Save Our Sequoias Act establishes a framework to support the ongoing restoration and recovery of giant sequoias, an iconic keystone species found only in the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains in California.

Sequoias are the largest trees on Earth. Some of them grow to be more than 300 feet tall. They are some of the most fire-resilient species, even evolving to need frequent, low-intensity fires to reproduce and survive, but climate change, drought, and historic fire suppression have led to catastrophic wildfires that are burning hotter and more intensely than ever before. These climate change-driven wildfires are posing an existential threat to giant sequoias, which are struggling to survive.

Over the past decade, nearly 20 percent of the entire population of giant sequoias has died. H.R. 2709 is a targeted bill that would codify existing emergency response efforts by the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and partners to promote reforestation and reduce future wildfire risk in giant sequoia groves.

These efforts are working. The Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition reported that 2024 was a landmark year for conservation work, with restoration and fuels-reduction efforts successfully completed across nearly half of the total sequoia growth acreage.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my Republican colleagues sincerely for their willingness to negotiate in good faith with us on this bill. In our shared commitment to protecting these iconic trees, these national treasures, we came together to address many of our outstanding concerns, ensuring that new authorities provided by the bill prioritize ecological integrity and science-backed decisionmaking without undermining core environmental standards.

The bill was strengthened by that very legislative process. It is a clear, old-fashioned example of how bipartisan negotiations can produce balanced, strategic approaches to forest, wildfire, and public land management. It is an approach I urge the Natural Resources Committee to continue to take.

Looking at the bigger picture here, Mr. Speaker, this bill is just one piece of the puzzle. Our Federal land management agencies, including the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, require funding and staffing to fulfill their congressionally mandated missions. These agencies cannot protect the giant sequoia without Congress giving them the necessary tools to carry out that work. New authorities alone will not save the sequoia.

The survival of one of America's most extraordinary national icons is at stake, and I urge Congress to take seriously its responsibility to support and steward our national parks, forests, and public lands from coast to coast.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I echo the remarks from my colleague, Ms. ELFRETH, about how this is the way we should do legislation. We took a field trip out to the sequoias, a bipartisan field trip. There is tons of research from academic institutions on what is happening in these sequoia groves. We looked at it. We worked together to create bipartisan legislation.

Honestly, we are way past time that we should have passed this bill, but I am so thankful that we have been able to get it on the floor today. I look forward to it passing out of the House and then moving on over to the Senate.

This bill sparks something else. We passed a very bipartisan bill in the House called the Fix Our Forests Act based off of the work we did on the Save Our Sequoias Act. That bill is over in the Senate right now waiting for Senate action. As we are moving into spring and will soon be moving into the summer months when wildfires are raging, that is another bill that we can't delay in getting passed.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO), a cosponsor of the bill who was on that field trip that we took when we saw the devastation in the sequoia grove.

□ 1610

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, that was a really good tour. I think it was about 4 years ago. As a dairy farmer, it is always interesting for us to learn the different parts of growing plants and animals and the impact they have.

Mr. WESTERMAN's expertise on this piece of legislation specifically really shown through on those days when we were driving around and spending a lot of time with then-Speaker McCarthy and a bipartisan group of Members. We learned a lot.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge support for the Save Our Sequoias Act. For generations, the giant sequoias have stood as one of the most recognizable symbols of California. These trees

are remarkably resilient to fire and were once considered virtually indestructible.

Today, they face a crisis of our own making. More than a century of fire suppression and forest mismanagement has allowed dangerous levels of fuel to build up around these groves, turning natural fires into catastrophic, high-severity wildfires.

Since 2015, these fires have caused unprecedented destruction. In just the last few years, nearly one-fifth of all giant sequoias have been lost. Without urgent action, we risk losing countless more. That is why I am proud to cosponsor the Save Our Sequoias Act.

This bill provides land managers with the emergency tools and resources they need to protect the remaining groves by strengthening coordination among Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners. It establishes a comprehensive assessment to prioritize wildfire risk reduction. It also streamlines reviews so critical forest management can move forward quickly, while maintaining strong scientific standards.

The Save Our Sequoias Act also encourages private partnerships to support restoration and establishes a comprehensive reforestation strategy to regenerate groves lost to recent wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the giant sequoias is about safeguarding a natural legacy for future generations. I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation, and I thank the chairman for his efforts on this legislation over the last few years.

Ms. ELFRETH. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, when I was in forestry school, the thing we learned about giant sequoias is they had this really thick layer of bark. At the time we didn't even really think it was possible to kill a giant sequoia with wildfire. That is because, as I mentioned earlier, it was 1297 when the last known death by fire occurred. Trees are like history books because we can count the rings and go back in time. We can see what happened.

These trees have withstood fires for millennia. In the blink of an eye, we could lose them all because the fire doesn't just burn down around the trunks anymore. With these other trees growing up into the crowns, it creates a ladder to take the fuel up into the crowns of the trees.

Henry Ford once said that failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently. The Save Our Sequoias Act is our opportunity to begin managing giant sequoia growth more intelligently.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Save Our Sequoias Act. I urge the Senate to swiftly take up this bill, and send it to the President's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2709, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK BOUNDARY MODIFICATION ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4467) to modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park in the State of Mississippi, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4467

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act”.

SEC. 2. VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK CONVEYANCE AND BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.

(a) CONVEYANCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”) shall convey to the State of Mississippi (referred to in this Act as the “State”), by quitclaim deed and without consideration, the Federal land described in paragraph (2) to be used in accordance with subsection (c).

(2) DESCRIPTION OF FEDERAL LAND.—The Federal land referred to in paragraph (1) is the following:

(A) The parcel of approximately 1.69 acres of Federal land within the boundary of Vicksburg National Military Park (referred to in this Act as the “Park”), as depicted on the map entitled “Vicksburg National Military Park Proposed Disposal of a Portion of NPS Tract 01-103”, numbered 306/194,908, and dated September 2024.

(B) The parcel of approximately 5.74 acres of Federal land within the boundary of the Park, as depicted on the map entitled “Vicksburg National Military Park Proposed Disposal of a Portion of NPS Tracts Near Union Ave”, numbered 306/194,907, and dated September 2024.

(b) BOUNDARY MODIFICATION.—On conveyance of the Federal land described in subsection (a), the Secretary shall modify the boundary of the Park to exclude the Federal land conveyed.

(c) USE OF LANDS.—The Federal land conveyed to the State under this Act—

(1) shall be used to facilitate public access to the Park and to enhance the visitor experience at the Park in a manner consistent with the interpretative mission of the Park, as determined by the Secretary;

(2) shall not be used in a manner that adversely impacts Park resources or the Park visitor experience, as determined by the Secretary; and

(3) shall be subject to any use restriction the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. ELFRETH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4467, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4467, the Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act, which was introduced by Representative THOMPSON and is cosponsored by the entire Mississippi congressional delegation.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation conveys two small parcels of National Park Service land to the State of Mississippi to build a new state-of-the-art welcome center for Vicksburg National Military Park.

Vicksburg National Military Park marks the site of the Battle of Vicksburg, one of the true watershed moments of the Civil War. Over the course of 6 weeks in 1863, Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant encircled the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg National Military Park, ultimately forcing its surrender on July 4, 1863. The victory gave the Union full control of the Mississippi River and split the Confederacy in half. It is widely recognized by historians as a turning point in the war.

Today, Vicksburg National Military Park contains more than 1,300 monuments and markers; 20 miles of reconstructed trenches; the USS *Cairo* gunboat; and the Vicksburg National Cemetery.

The park serves as a major destination in Mississippi for education, reflection, and historical tourism. In fact, in 2022, more than 400,000 visitors came to Vicksburg, generating approximately \$36 million in economic activity and supporting hundreds of local jobs.

While that economic and educational impact is substantial, it is currently constrained by aging visitor facilities that limit public engagement. To address this, the State of Mississippi is leading an effort to build a new state-of-the-art welcome center, which would be financed with non-Federal dollars.

H.R. 4467 helps support this effort by transferring two small parcels of National Park Service land, totaling approximately 7 acres, to the State so they can build this new facility for visitors.

This legislation is an important and practical step that will enhance the visitor experience without unnecessary expense to the Federal taxpayer. This is a model for future public-private partnerships and a win-win for both the Federal Government and the State of Mississippi.

By improving visitor experiences and enhancing a site integral to American history, this bill also directly advances the goals of President Trump’s executive order on celebrating America’s 250th birthday.

I thank the entire Mississippi congressional delegation for their work advancing this practical bill that will improve public access and education during America’s 250th anniversary year at this hallowed site.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ELFRETH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4467, a bill offered by my colleague, Representative THOMPSON of Mississippi.

H.R. 4467 authorizes the National Park Service to convey two small pieces of property within Vicksburg National Military Park to the State of Mississippi. This partnership will enhance the visitor experience at the park by facilitating the construction of a new visitor center, built and eventually staffed by the State of Mississippi.

Strategically partnering with the State will empower our Federal park rangers to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of such a sacred and important place.

The siege of Vicksburg was a crucial moment in the Civil War. Positioned on the Mississippi River in central Mississippi, Confederate President Jefferson Davis called the city of Vicksburg the nailhead that holds the South’s two halves together. As President Lincoln saw it, Vicksburg was the key to winning the war.

Eager to capture this important city, Union General Ulysses S. Grant ordered the siege of Vicksburg in 1863. By July 4 of that year, the Union Army finally had full control over the Mississippi River. Coupled with the defeat of the Confederate troops at Gettysburg, the siege of Vicksburg was a turning point in the war, paving the way for Union victory.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the founding of our Nation, we must reflect on all parts of our history—the good, the bad, and the ugly; the lessons we need to learn; and the mistakes we cannot afford to repeat.

□ 1620

Sites like Vicksburg Military National Park are where Americans can learn about our past, and sanitizing these hallowed sites is a disservice to our Nation’s history. H.R. 4467 is an opportunity. My hope is that the new visitor center will convey the full weight of the painful battle and the context of the Civil War to share the uncomfortable truth rather than perpetuate, unfortunately, this administration’s erasure of history.

I thank Representative THOMPSON and the entire Mississippi delegation for introducing this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4467 and to